

THREE
LETTERS

TO THE

Right Hon. Edmund Burke.

[Price 1s. 6d.]

TABLE

LIST OF

THE

Right Hon. Edmund Burke

Printed by

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LETTERS
TO THE
Right Hon. Edmund Burke,
ON THE STATE OF
PUBLIC AFFAIRS;
AND
PARTICULARLY ON THE LATE
OUTRAGEOUS ATTACKS
ON HIS
PENSION.

BY AN OLD WHIG.

P. R.
16

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1796.

THREE
LETTERS

TO THE
Right Hon. Edmund Burke,

OF THE STATE OF
PUBLIC AFFAIRS;

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IN THE
MATTER OF THE LATE
GEOFFREY OSBORNE ATTACKS
1846



LETTER I.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
EDMUND BURKE.

SIR,

THOUGH my admiration of your talents may be greatly disproportioned to your expectations, and to that adulation which you have been accustomed to receive from your immediate flatterers and dependants, yet it would be unjust to deny that I have generally derived pleasure from the perusal of your writings. They are the productions of a fertile and lively imagination, and of a mind not destitute of energy; a mind which is stored with learning, of a peculiar kind, with little indeed of scientific, or useful knowledge, but with much of that description, which administers most copiously to entertainment. If, however, I have been amused with your fancy, I have never found much reason to compliment your judgment. Both your writings and your conduct seem essentially deficient in this quality—You “snatch a grace beyond the reach of art”—Prudence seems with you

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a *vulgar* and despicable virtue, unworthy of a man of genius; and for want of this one useful, balancing power of the mind, your talents have generally been misapplied. If any proof, Sir, was wanting of your total want of prudence, that proof was most amply supplied, by the appearance of your late Letter to a noble Lord.

No man endued with common prudence would, at your age, and after the events of your past life, have challenged a public discussion of his merits. No public man who had changed his party, as you have done; no man who had contradicted, denied, defamed his former self—no apostate who had pocketted the wages of iniquity; sold himself and his opinions—no man who had received, from a distressed and impoverished country, a pension, for the amount of which scarcely any merit or services could afford an apology; but which evidently far exceeds your merits, and ought to exceed your necessities—no prudent man, thus circumstanced, would have been anxious to publish to the world his shame and its reward—

“ And like some penurious quack-falver,
“ Have stuck the bills up to his own disgrace.”

You might have quietly “ reposed” under the
gentle

gentle shade of that tame, obedient, confiding majority, which covers all delinquencies. They would humanely have quashed inquiry ; they would have silenced cavil ; and by a composing and consolatory vote, would have transferred the infamy from you to themselves. But, Sir, you have unfortunately waved these high privileges ; you have descended from the " vantage ground," on which you were posted. You have stripped and entered the common arena, to challenge bullies and prize-fighters. You have indeed shewn that " the days of chivalry " are not quite passed away. Like the valourous champion whom you are by some thought to resemble, and whose portrait the exquisite pencil of Cervantes has transmitted to posterity as a model of gallantry, you have thrown down the gauntlet where it was certain to be taken up.

You have disclaimed the advantage of numbers ; you have spurned the friendly support and aid, which that kind and compassionate body, the ministerial phalanx, might have afforded ; even the balmy consolations of the golden-mouthed * Lord Grenville, were disregarded ; and, as if you were

* *Χρυσόστομος*. The name of a celebrated saint in the Romish Calendar.

invulnerable, you have publicly set yourself up, as the target, on which young marksmen may try their skill with impunity and advantage—And I am sorry to add, the mark is so broad, that it is impossible but that some of the arrows should strike, and perhaps leave their barb in the wound.

You have challenged, and I foresee there will be no lack of combatants—"The insect youth" in the vicinity of St. Giles's, are already on the wing; already they begin to hum and buz—Already the monosyllable most grateful to your ears, "Slides in a verse, and hitches in a rhyme"—Already it stands "rubric on the wall"—Already the names of Burke and Thelwall form a friendly coalition in large letters, on the vacant spaces of public edifices—Already the caricature shops are clearing their windows for your reception—"The old man with a young pension"—"The two-faced orator, with one to the king, and another to the people," and a thousand pretty devices of the same nature, are even now, I understand, in agitation.

Is it possible, that this is a kind of fame, of which you are ambitious? I recollect, indeed, that I have before discovered in you, symptoms of this disposition.

disposition. If, then, fame and notoriety are your objects, you will have them ; but remember that if you have them, you must pay the price, you must take the evil with the good---Remember too, that whatever you may suffer, you have brought it on yourself. You have really prescribed and defined the laws of the contest---If you suffer from personal calumny, you have, by your example, invited retaliation ; you have called for asperity of language, and a severe examination of your public conduct. If, therefore, your skin, like John Zisca's, according to your own elegant allusion, is to be converted into an instrument of terror ; remember that you have formed, and fitted, and carved the drumsticks yourself ; and if by this, or any other medium, an alarm can be sounded through the regions of corruption, it will certainly be more advantageous to mankind, than that harsh, discordant *war-whoop*, which you vociferate with all the clamour of an uncivilized barbarian.

Your ambition indeed, Sir, of late has assumed a most singular and preposterous character. There was a time when you would less have valued the praises of Lord Grenville ; there was a time when you treated the " School-boy " statesmen with less respect ; and when you at least affected to be less callous to the contempt of great
and

and independent characters. For my part, I do not hesitate to assert, that I would prefer a single sentence of commendation from such men, to the most laboured eulogy that the hard heads of Lord Grenville, Sir Watkin Lewis, Sir John Mitford, Sir James Saunderson, Lord Abingdon, or Mr. Alderman Curtis, could painfully produce. But I have heard of a man whose taste and ear were so lamentably depraved, as to prefer the brayings of a jack-ass to the most enchanting strains of a Handel.

In making a few remarks on your Letter, I should wish, if it were possible, to preserve some lucid order, some regular plan; but its texture is so unequal, its arrangement so distorted, that I am at a loss where to begin, or what method to pursue. It is extremely difficult to conjecture what relation there can be between your pension and the French Revolution; your 4000l. per annum, and the present hopeful war; in your own mind there may be some whimsical association between these topics, for I observe that the mention of the one inevitably brings the other to your recollection. It would have been candid in you to explain this connexion; under which of the moral relations it is to be classed, whether under that of cause and effect, of contiguity, or resemblance, or

contrariety. Had you done this, I might perhaps have been able to reply to your first four pages, which at present, for want of this explanation, appear neither more nor less than rhapsody.

To elude the difficulty you tell us that common minds, that is men of plain common sense, and men versed in arithmetic, geometry, and such vulgar sciences, "cannot readily comprehend the transaction," and in this I perfectly agree with you—We really do not *comprehend* the nature of the transaction in question; yet, I am much mistaken, if it is not in your power to explain it.

"It was the fruit of no bargain; the production of no intrigue; the result of no compromise; the effect of no solicitation."—Now, Sir, is it possible that you can be so weak, as to flatter yourself for a moment, that there exists in this country a single man so stupidly credulous as to be blinded by these assertions? Is the minister that frank and liberal friend of genius, that he forces, and heaps his favours on the deserving; with no view, no interest, no intrigue? Let the moral merits of Mr. Dundas and Mr. Rose; let the brilliant talents of Sir John Mitford, of Mr. Brooke Watson, of Mr. Alderman Le Mesurier, and Mr. Alderman Curtis, and a long train of worthies in church

church and state, vouch for this assertion. The late loan was undoubtedly a simple effort to reward genius and virtue. The war itself was entered into merely to call merit out of obscurity; and the office of *third secretary of state* was revived, contrary to both the letter and the spirit of your own Bill, only to give a scope to the profound penetration, the splendid abilities, and the deep political wisdom, of that great statesman the Duke of Portland.

How disinterested towards his own family and connexions!—How negligent of himself is this Heaven-born minister! How indifferent to election jobs; to the gaining of suffrages both in and out of the house! What a patron of literature has he ever shewn himself—and after this you will say: “Can any man doubt that my pension has been obtained by the most honourable means? No connexions to be gained—No dupes to be made—No pamphlets to be written—No man’s character and ancestry to be libelled”---No, No!!!

Yet there is something mysterious in the transaction after all. If your pension be really the reward of your past services; of your reform in the pay-office; of your reform in the civil list; why did not the minister embrace the first opportunity of
rewarding

rewarding you after his accession to office? Why was the meed of virtue delayed till a period of life, when, according to your own statement, it can scarcely be of advantage to you? "Had you died," as you observe in this long interim, you "had earned" your pension; but you would not have had it; and, alas! I can easily see that "those who belonged to you" would not have had it.—Is this then the way that liberality and public spirit dispense public and liberal rewards? For ten long years and more, the prudent Chancellor has chosen to pause, before he could determine whether you had merited his bounty or not.—Would to Heaven he had been equally cautious, slow, and circumspect in all his measures! We should not now have to bewail his rashness in tears of blood; to curse from the bottom of our hearts his boyish ambition.

Sir, it was at a very suspicious period, indeed, that the minister's heart and hand were opened.—It was at a period, when two mad schemes had been defeated by the union and energy of the Whig Party; and just when another hopeful project had taken possession of his brain. Then was it necessary to thin the ranks, and destroy the activity of this formidable phalanx. To throw among you the golden apple of discord, and, by their eager-

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ness to catch it, to render some of you for ever contemptible.

When you modestly inform us that your merits are incomprehensible, I feel disposed to agree with you. When you set vulgar arithmetic at defiance, and hold it in conrempt, I am less inclined to assent. Vulgar arithmetic I cannot but hold to be a useful science, though the result of its calculations may be a little awkward on some occasions—I dare predict, for instance, that the minister would be glad that Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Morgan * understood this vulgar science no better than himself. Yet, on the other hand, the nation has cause to wish that their Chancellor of the Exchequer would pay a little attention to such investigations. If he did, we should not now have to lament an accumulation of one hundred and forty millions to the public debt from his disastrous administration.—We should not, perhaps, be pressed down with taxes; our resources daily diminishing; while one inauspicious loan is improvidently raised to make good deficiencies, and pay the interest of another.

* See a pamphlet which every Englishman ought to read, entitled, “ Facts, addressed to the serious Attention of the People of Great Britain.”

When you speak of “ the theory of moral proportions,” and “ of the rule of three, in the arithmetic of policy and state,” indeed, Sir, I am obliged to plead the same incorrigible ignorance with which you stigmatise the Duke of Bedford. I am a plain man, and the arithmetic of metaphysics I do not understand ; and what is more, I have never yet been fortunate enough to meet with a man that was able to explain it to me. I cannot help it, Sir, but I am inclined to suspect, that this is neither more nor less than what we term *jargon* ; and an old man with new nonsense, is just as ridiculous as a young man with *old* absurdities. Whatever is incomprehensible to plain and undepraved reason is *jargon* ; and I have often thought it difficult to decide, which party excels most in that figure of speech, which is called the unintelligible, Mr. Burke, or the new philosophers.

When, however, you come to speak of services, you then seem to descend from the high and cloudy regions of metaphysics, and come within the scope of a common man’s capacity. But I will not depreciate your services, by supposing that the enumeration of them can be consistent with the limits of this letter. I shall, therefore, from pure respect, dedicate my next epistle entirely to their consideration. But it is something extraordinary,

that these services have never been till lately discovered; it is something not less extraordinary, that you are obliged to tell us of them yourself. It is very extraordinary, that so discerning a person as the Marquis of Rockingham, should not have seen them in their proper light, and that the rewarding of them should have been left to the administration of Mr. Pitt.

“Pension for myself,” you say (alluding I presume to the Rockingham administration), “I obtained none.”—Which, by the way, reminds me a little of a certain inflated translation of Tacitus—“At this time war there was none.” A tale, however, has been told (and this tale unfortunately remains uncontradicted) of a certain great orator, who obtained a pension on the Irish establishment of 1500*l.* per annum. This pension he chose to have in *another* name, because, I presume, he was *then* ashamed of appearing as a stipendiary. Whether this pension or annuity was mortgaged, or sold, or in what manner it was disposed of, is little to our present purpose. If it was, it would only serve to prove your position, that the house of Russel understand vulgar arithmetic better than certain great metaphysical philosophers—They have kept their property undiminished through revolving ages; this great orator has been obliged, through

through improvidence, to sell one pension, and bargain for another.

With these few observations I shall wish you a good night; to-morrow I shall present you with a few more in the same plain style—

————— “ Read this,

“ And this, and this, and then to breakfast
With what appetite you may.”

I am, Sir, your's, &c.

Westpark, March 3,
1796.

R. P.

LETTER II.

SIR,

THERE are no publications which contribute more to general entertainment ; I might add, to general information and improvement, than those in which the author lays open the recesses of his own heart, the secret history of his motives, his intentions and his conduct. I do not approve of the prudence of the authors, but the utility of such productions I am always willing to admit. It is not always necessary that these narratives should contain nothing but pictures of wisdom and of virtue. Whatever they may be, they shew us human nature, and human life. I can, therefore, peruse, with pleasure, the Confessions of Rousseau, and of Mr. Burke ; the Life of Major Semple, and the no less interesting adventures of any political swindler.

I have expected latterly, with some impatience, a detail of the motives which induced you to embark in projects of reform, and I am happy, in your present work (which may be styled your Confessions)

essions) to find at least an *ingenious* explanation of what appeared so inconsistent with the political doctrines which you have lately published as the governing maxims of your conduct.

In stating your services, you have been, as usual, rather prolix *. You have contrived to envelope a *very little* solid sterling matter in a huge matrix of a certain base and useless production, which the French call *verbiage*. I can, however, easily forgive "the importance of a man to himself," nor is it the first time you have evinced, that you have studied with effect the "Memoirs of P. P. clerk "of this parish." After some difficulty in developing the facts from the mass of words, in which they are involved, it appears that you confine your claims to merit, to three principal objects: the reform in the pay-office; the reform in the civil list; and the India affairs, alias, the prosecution of Mr. Hastings.

* Mr. Burke, from his long speeches, was called the dinner bell of the House of Commons, as when he rose to speak, it had generally the effect of clearing the house. His antipathy, indeed, in the first instance, to the French revolution, is attributed to a witticism common in the national assembly, as it was usual when a member was proceeding in a tedious and uninteresting speech, to cry out—"Point à la Burke!"

Where

Where very gross and flagrant abuses exist, they exist not because they are undiscovered and unknown, but because they are connived at for particular ends, and corrupt purposes. The difficulty is not to find out a remedy, but to obtain sufficient influence to apply that remedy. Thus, as to the abuses in the pay-office, they were known to thousands; and you made a clamour (while in opposition) concerning these abuses, and you committed yourself too far to retract. When you came in with the Rockingham administration, you acted with honourable men, who, for the sake of their own character, could not have permitted this Augean stable to remain totally uncleansed, after what you had advanced upon the subject, had you been ever so willing. But, if I am not mistaken, there is not a clerk in that office, who would not, if properly supported, have been able to effect a much more complete reform, than you effected, with half the clamour, and who would not have thought himself amply compensated for the whole labour by one half the amount of one year's income from your pension.

In enumerating your services in this office, your modesty, however, has led you to omit one, which stands prominent above the rest, in the eyes of every man of sense and probity. You have omitted

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to state, that you have replaced in offices of trust in that department two men who had been dismissed for fraud, speculation, and public robbery; who were at that moment under a criminal prosecution for their offences. You endeavoured to screen them from justice by your influence and eloquence. One of them had rather more modesty and conscience than his unblushing patron and defender, and removed himself, by an act (which God forbid I should justify) from public disgrace; and with respect to the other, a common jury, who judged by the rules of vulgar arithmetic, and not by the new scale of moral proportions, rectified your decision.

If I understand rightly your account of your other projects of reform, they amount to what is termed in plain and *vulgar* language, a *humbug*. The people wanted a reality, and you put them off with a shadow; they called for reform, and you determined to give them something else, which might please and gratify them.---A nostrum of your own preparing, which I grant the *existing circumstances* of the nation, and the very subject of your present appeal, prove was of very little efficacy in restricting the influence of the crown. It was something which was to act like animal magnetism, not on the *body politic*, but on the imagi-

nation of the patient. You, however, did not behave with the accustomed generosity of your brethren in Moorfields, who, with at least the *semblance* of *honesty*, place in large letters on their bills, the alluring sentence,---“ No cure no pay.”—

—You require an enormous reward for doing—nothing; and you now pleasantly tell us, that though you effected nothing to the purpose, yet you perhaps prevented your patient from falling into the hands of some more desperate and ignorant quack than yourself. I was, at that time, a much younger man than I am now, and I remember I thought Lord Thurlow illiberal for the observations which he made upon your plans, which he termed “ A puny regulation, only calculated to deceive and betray the people.”—You have now burst the bubble yourself, and come forward with some share of modest assurance, to boast how handsomely you duped us; and solemnly to assure us “ that it was not your love but your hatred to innovation, that produced the plan of reform.”

In the same happy style you inform us concerning the fund out of which your pension is granted : “ This of the $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cents. does his grace imagine had escaped me ?” The event shows that it did not escape you; and most men will now give you credit for what you affirm, that the *fund* from which

which a pension might issue was always " full in your eye." But I ask you, Sir, not what you thought, but what you professed? for, by your own account of yourself, we are never to look upon your intentions, but upon your professions. I ask you then seriously to answer me, if you can answer a plain question in plain words.

Did you not know that this fund was solemnly appropriated by the authority of the legislature by which it was raised, for the defence *only* of the Leeward islands; as appears in the act passed by the assembly of Barbadoes in 1663?

Have you never declared, when you were asked why this fund was not included in your reform bill, that the reason was, that this fund was otherwise appropriated, and no pension could be legally granted upon it?

Did you not applaud Lord Thurlow's conduct, when he refused to put the seal to the pension which was to have been granted to Lord Auckland, issuing out of this fund, upon the grounds that every such grant was illegal?

Though you have been thus industrious to exhibit yourself to the public in the character of a

bottle conjurer—as the Katterfelto of the House of Commons, I, Sir, am more willing to do you justice, than you are yourself. I believe you were, at one period at least, in earnest in your projects of reform, because it suited your purpose, and because you acted in concert with honourable and honest men, the Rockinghams and the Savilles. You must remember that you lamented in the strongest terms, that you were *not able* to effect more in the cause of reform. You now take advantage of this circumstance, and make a merit of your impotence. You know the *stuff* (to speak in your own language) of which the men with whom you now act, are made ; you know they are shallow, though cunning. *They*, I believe, are the dupes, and not the public. Because you are not *able*, you persuade them that you were not *willing* to do more. If, therefore, you can make them believe that you were *false* and insincere in your former professions, I dare say it will enhance your merit with them. That you are *now* an apostate is certainly no mean recommendation; if you can persuade them that you were *always* a *hypocrite*, it will doubtless double, at least, your value in the eyes of Mr. Pitt and Lord Grenville, who seem to adopt, pretty much the same rules of “ moral proportion” with yourself.

This

This observation may possibly lead to an explanation of that singular *equivoque*, or mental reservation, which I know has embarrassed some sensible persons, who have read your Pamphlet---You “hold one language to your opponents, and another to the King.” To the one you boast of your services; —“before the presence of the other you claim no merit at all; every thing there is favour, is bounty.” Indeed, Sir, it would not be an easy task to prove what the services are which you have rendered to the King. No man, in my opinion, can have less occasion to thank you for your past services than the King---He cannot thank you in his heart. I will affirm that no man’s writings and speeches were ever more calculated to bring Kings into contempt than your’s: no not those of Thomas Paine himself. Revise them, Sir, even in the garbled edition to which you refer, if you doubt my assertion. Perhaps in the eye of “a mild and benevolent Sovereign,” you may derive some merit from repentance---I am glad you have repented---I venerate the constitution and the monarchy---I scorn equally the metaphysical doctrines of Paine and of Burke; I have often (and on one occasion in particular) felt indignant at the indecency of your expressions when speaking of the Majesty of England. But forgiveness and reward are extremely different, That, as a penitent,
you

you deserved to be forgiven, I admit; but that, as a penitent, you should claim a reward of 4000*l.* per annum, is an insult on common sense.

On the subject of the affairs of India, I must say, it would have become you to be silent. The least concession that can be expected from the *false accuser* is, that in obscurity and modest silence he should hide his diminished head---But it is a fashion with the *new* philosophers, or *new* statesmen shall I call them? (for every thing now is new) to arraign the most solemn adjudications of the most solemn tribunals. Your disciple Mr. Wyndham has discovered that men who have been declared "not guilty," by the verdict and voice of their country, are "only acquitted felons;" and you, after Mr. Hastings has been absolved by the highest court of judicature established by this constitution, obstinately and perversely claim a degree of merit for having instituted a vexatious suit, for having caused the nation fruitlessly to expend more than even the value of your pension, for having created quarrels, raised ill-founded suspicions, and exhibited a mighty farce, which, in my opinion, was far from honourable to either the Lords or the Commons of Great Britain.

Our *liberal* administration, however, who concurred

curred with you in urging the prosecution, have seen their error, and have, I understand, voted Mr. Hastings a compensation for his sufferings.— Let it be recorded among the ever memorable curiosities of the eighteenth century, among the wonders of a wonder-working minister---“ Mr. Burke was pensioned for prosecuting Mr. Hastings; and Mr. Hastings for having been prosecuted !”

Did you display your knowledge of India affairs by the palpable falsehoods which you asserted in your opening speech?---Did you display your spirit in maintaining your assertions, when Captain Williams called you to account ?

Of your services to Ireland I will candidly confess my inability to decide. I want documents and proof to enable me to speak positively either to the affirmative or the negative of the question---You say, “ My endeavour was to obtain liberty for the municipal country in which I was born, and for all descriptions and denominations in it”---If I may speak my sentiments freely, and I speak them subject to your correction, it is my opinion, that whatever Ireland has obtained, was obtained, not by your endeavours, but by her own energy, sense, and spirit. Your endeavours, I suspect, were confined to your *good wishes*, and even those wishes
were

were restricted to a particular description of men--- Yet I rejoice in the emancipation of Ireland (as far as it has been effected) from civil and religious oppression; and if you have had any share in these reforms, as soon as you can *prove* your merits, I will give you full credit for them, whatever might be the religious prejudices under which you acted. The laws against the Catholics in Ireland were a system of robbery, a standing libel on every principle of justice. Like some of the cruel regulations of Sparta, they seemed, as if they had been enacted to encourage chicanery, and to hold out a public recompence for fraud. I have heard narratives of their effects, disgusting to every natural feeling and sympathy of man---Narratives (*fabulous* perhaps) but the bare possibility of which is shocking to humanity, and disgraceful to legislation. I have heard of trusts executed under the most sacred oaths and engagements, which have been converted, by the perversion of law, into instruments to defraud the orphan and the widow. I have heard of estates committed in confidence and friendship to the tutelage of others; and I have heard of their being wrested from their lawful possessors by the operation of these odious statutes; and even vesting in the families of those who committed the first violation of a sacred trust. I should hope that these random reports are only the *fictions* of
of

of Catholics, to shew in more glaring colours the legal slavery under which they were reduced ; but still they were *possible*, while the statutes in question existed, and though I am no admirer of the Popish superstitions, yet I sincerely, for the sake of justice, rejoice with you, that these oppressive statutes exist no more.

If you can prove that you have been instrumental in obtaining redress for this injured class of men, I shall be the first to acknowledge your merits ; but for your other services, which you affirm *money could not reward*, I cannot assent to your postulate, that “ they are more than the Duke of Bedford’s ideas of service are of power to estimate ? ” --- I can only agree in your conclusion, that you ought not to have had your *reward in money* ; your reward ought to have been of a very different nature. --- I believe, Sir, I can draw up a much more correct bill of costs and charges for you than you have drawn up for yourself ; and in spite of your aversion to vulgar arithmetic, I shall adopt the usual forms, as it will answer the purpose of perspicuity, at least to vulgar readers, better than your system of “ moral proportions ” ---

The British Nation Debtor,

To the Right Hon. Edmund Burke.

	£	s.	d.
For my great and meritorious services in his Majesty's kitchen	0	0	0
For obliging the King and Queen, of an opulent nation, to eat by contract, like the inhabitants of a workhouse	0	0	0
For weeping over the tattered shirt and breeches of the Jew, worsted in a certain scuffle at St. Eustatia	0	0	0
For defending Powell and Bembridge	0	0	0
For the sublime discovery, that "Kings are always lovers of low company"	0	0	0
For "hurling the King from his throne"	0	0	0
For the facetious and elegant stories of Deby Sing, prince Cantemir, &c. &c. told for the entertainment of the ladies of the court	0	0	0
For deserting and abusing all my old friends and connexions	26,000	0	0
For humanely endeavouring to provoke all Europe to massacre			

each

each other, and to embroil Eng- £. s. d.
land in an unnecessary quarrel,
which has already cost the nation
only 140 millions - 9,999 19 9½

For the celebrated dagger scene
in the House of Commons - 0 0 2½

Total amount of my pension
for six lives, at nine years pur-
chase - 36,000 0 0

The above account I have supposed to be checked, as in the course of business, by the Chancellor of his Majesty's Exchequer—But any of the items shall be rectified on a proper application from yourself, as I really do not wish to wrong or misrepresent you.

I am, Sir, your's, &c:

Westpark, March 4,
1796.

R. P.

LETTER III.

SIR,

IN my former Letter, I had occasion to notice the obligations which you have conferred upon the King, and the services which you have rendered to the cause of monarchy; but I really did not know, till I read your last publication, the extent of those favours which you have conferred on the ancient aristocracy of the realm; I did not know that you had determined to act with such an impartial hand; to distribute justice with so nice and even a ballance, that you would leave no room for complaint on the part of the nobility, of the partiality which you had previously demonstrated to kings.

This is a subject, Sir, which I shall have presently to notice, and you may depend upon it the Republicans will notice it too. Your shaft is at present avowedly directed at the Duke of Bedford; and because he was born to high rank and great fortune, it is your object to persuade your readers, that he is destitute of talents. I am not, Sir, the official defender of his grace, I have only undertaken

taken to unmask *you*; and to shew you that I know you better than you seem to suspect it possible for any man to know you *, I will tell you, that it is not his grace's rank or fortune that has terrified you on this occasion;—it is his talents. This circumstance it is that has rendered you captious, querulous, and vindictive. Had he not been possessed of talents, let his fortune be what it would, like some other dukes and peers, with whom both you and I can boast a slight acquaintance, he might quietly have dozed upon the benches of the House of Lords, without any pensioned libeller attempting to disturb his repose.

Lest we should, however, mistake your real aim and object, you tell us that your introduction of the Duke of Bedford on the stage, is to serve as a mere *vehicle*, “to convey your sentiments on matters far more worthy of attention”---The abstract subject immediately connected with this sentence is hereditary nobility---and the inference is, that you desire your remarks to be abstractly applied. I have indeed always suspected, that Thomas Paine (with whom I understand you were once intimate) and you have more opinions in common than you

* Naturalists tell us of a certain animal, which, when it conceals its head, supposes that because it sees nobody, it is impossible any person should see it.

have avowed. This at least I am sure of, that neither he nor Joel Barlow has treated the privileged orders with more disrespect than you have, in the very publication that lies before me. The only difference between you is this, that they have written in the abstract, as upon a speculative subject; you have chosen to personify---They have laid down general principles; you have descended to particulars---They have argued upon hypothesis and conjecture; you have instanced---They said exactly the same things that you have said; but I will grant they have not said them so well.

To be a member of the House of Peers, according to your *new* politico-philosophy, is to be "Swaddled, and rocked, and dandled into a legislator;" I recollect a passage exactly similar in one of these writers, but not half so forcibly expressed. The nobility, you insinuate, "have an hereditary privilege to be fools;" "The arts that recommend men to the favour and protection of the great," are to be "a minion or a tool"---"To follow the trade of winning hearts, by imposing on the understandings of the people." In exposing the origin of nobility, and the enormity and profligacy of "grants from the crown," how successful would republican critics esteem you? Their effect is to create "Leviathans" in the state---The royal
"lion

“ lion first sucks the blood of his prey, and throws the offal to the jackal in waiting.” The merits of the nobility are not “ original and personal, but derivative;” nay, if one of a race happens not to be a “ minion,” and “ an instrument,” he “ degenerates into virtue”---“ The herald’s college, however, “ seek no further merit than the preamble to a patent, or the inscription on a tomb; they judge of every man’s capacity by the offices he has filled”---Are we reading citizen Paine, or citizen Barlow, or the abbé Sieyes?---No, gentle reader, it is no other than Mr. Burke !

I pass over your notorious breach of the privileges of the house. I venerate these privileges upon principle. You may call this principle a prejudice, perhaps, when it suits you to dispense with it, though no man was more ready to enforce it, when you were personally concerned. Even prejudices, Sir, are in some measure respectable, when united with consistency. But even principles lose reverence in the eyes of the multitude, when those who most strongly contend for them, are the first to violate them for private ends or selfish purposes.

It has, indeed, been said of you, with some shrewdness, that “ you have turned king’s evidence
against

against the aristocracy"---and I have quoted your sentiments, I assure you, not as approving them. It is certain that rank neither confers talents, nor precludes them—Hereditary nobles are like other men, with respect to capacity. They possess some advantages of education, and I believe the proportion of men of parts among them, is much the same as among other men, who have had similar advantages. Some, like the Duke of Bedford and the Earl of Lauderdale, reflect a lustre by their talents, their spirit, and their independence, on the conspicuous stations in which they are placed; some serve as the mere passive ornaments of a court, which they decorate on a birth-day, or some similar solemnity. In their collective capacity, they are placed as a barrier between the usurpations of prerogative, and the clamours of democracy. Our history abounds in instances where they have successfully withstood both. To the aristocracy of England we are indebted for no small portion of our liberties—For the Magna Charta---For the reformation, by the protection which some of them afforded, in its early stages, to the persecuted reformers, and by the spirit with which they resisted the papal usurpations --For the glorious Revolution, which the aristocracy planned and effected. The aristocracy relieved the nation from the calamities and horrors of the American war—and if the national spirit is now
sunk

sunk and degraded, it is to be attributed to the corrupt and overwhelming influence of a pernicious monied aristocracy; to a new created, mushroom aristocracy, and not to the ancient nobility of the realm.

Your pedigree of the Duke of Bedford I do not mean at present to dispute. I would only observe, that your statement, relative to the fate of the Duke of Buckingham, &c. is directly contrary to the testimony of Hume and other respectable historians; and I suspect that you have only been guilty of a mistake of about twenty years, which, with you, is to be sure a trifling anachronism; for I believe "the first peer of the house of Russel" did not come into office, notice, or power, till about twenty years after the decease of the Duke of Buckingham; and if he had been at that period in office, he could be no further concerned in that or any other of the transactions you would impute to him, than the rest of the privy-council, who were a numerous body. He was no prime minister, though I grant that he was raised from the station of a respectable private gentleman, and was ennobled and enriched by the favour of his Sovereign. But supposing every word you have asserted to be fact, how illiberal is the charge, when applied to a descendant of the family, after a lapse of two

hundred years! You would deem it unworthy conduct in any man who was to upbraid you with being the son of an obscure pettifogging attorney in Dublin. Such a *circumstance* cannot affect your merits: and you certainly pay the Duke of Bedford a high compliment, when the heaviest crime you can lay to his charge, is, that one of his remote ancestors was a *Courtier*. But I perceive your object—You would destroy the hereditary respect, ingrafted in the hearts of Englishmen for the house of Russel.—You shall never eradicate it, while we venerate our constitution and our liberties! That respect can only be annihilated by the misconduct of that house themselves. In the present representative of that honoured name, the spirit of his ancestor (not him whom you have reviled, but one whom even you cannot revile) survives.—He is, and must be dear to the people.—If you wish to degrade and disgrace the house of Russel, it will not be effected by impotent libels against him; but by persuading him, if you can, to imitate your conduct. It is not your enmity, Mr. Burke, that can destroy popularity, it is your friendship.

You have assigned an origin and pedigree to the Duke of Bedford, which would, perhaps, better suit many of the most opulent and respectable families in this kingdom—But have you considered
the

the ruinous consequences of this levelling principle?—Do you not perceive that it extends not merely to the annihilation of nobility, but of property itself? If no man have a lawful claim to property, but he whose ancestors obtained it by the fairest and most honourable means, who among us can be safe in his possessions? This is worse than French Democracy; this is more than the Convention itself, in the very madness of confiscation, has dared to assume.

I hope I have read, with a proper portion of sympathy and humanity, your affecting and elegant tribute to the memory of your son. Sorrow is ever sacred in my eyes—I will not enquire into the truth and correctness of the eulogium, nor disturb the ashes, you wish to embalm. Let him be all that you describe, and more, if it will ease your heart of a single pang—I pity you from my soul.—

I pity you more than ordinary men.—I pity you, because in your partiality to that son, I see the only apology that can be offered for your past conduct. It is a tribute which in justice I owe to you, to say, that I believe you have been the dupe of parental fondness. I believe, to that son you sacrificed your reputation, your character, your present and your future peace. I believe, that to make

him great, you made yourself little. I believe that it was to obtain a splendid and lucrative establishment for that son, that, by a fatal desertion of party and of principles, you at one blow demolished the fair fabric of fame, which you had been erecting, and became the abject tool of a minister, whose talents you ever held in just contempt; whose puerile arrogance must even now disgust you; and whose little and contemptible arts must be offensive to a mind of any dignity, of any cultivation.

To pass from a subject which cannot be grateful to you (the comparison of what you were, with what you are) to one which is more within my province, and my object; I cannot admit the justice of the analogy, which you endeavour to establish between your pension, and an ancient grant from the crown. A grant of lands from the crown, at the period in question, stands upon a footing entirely different from your's. At that period, happily for the nation, there was no public debt to be redeemed. Lands fell to the crown, by the ordinary process of law.—Whether the sentence by which they escheated was just or unjust, is a question foreign to the purpose. These lands must have a possessor, and the king assigned them, according to his prerogative, to that possessor whom he esteemed most deserving of them. If the King,
after

after they came into his possession, impoverished any person, it was himself: and no friend of liberty would wish that the crown had retained possession of the immense estates which were added to the royal demesnes by the legal course of escheat and forfeiture. But your pension, Sir, is wrung by heavy and cruel taxes, in times of public distress, from an oppressed and suffering people. The half-famished cottager, who receives the miserable pittance of *sixteen-pence* a day for the subsistence of perhaps an infant family, pays a portion of that *sixteen-pence* to maintain you in luxury. You say you "have not more than sufficient"—Believe me, I am truly sorry for the assertion. If your pension was meant for your future subsistence, it is certainly "more than sufficient" for the support of a man of letters and a philosopher: if it was meant for the supply of former deficiencies *, the fact is not more to your credit. The man who, through extravagance or profusion, loses his independence, loses every safeguard of virtue and of honour; he lays himself open to the approaches of the tempter;

* It is a remarkable circumstance, that of the two branches or annuities which compose Mr. Burke's pension, one (I believe the larger) is secured upon three young lives, not one of whom is of his own family. The other is secured upon two young lives, neither of them of his own family, with the insertion only of his own name in it, though not in the former.

he becomes necessarily the tool, the sport of bad men for bad purposes. I have heard, indeed, circumstances relative to the negociation for your pension, with the repetition of which I shall not wound you at present. I have heard of difficulties and embarrassments, and I was sorry to hear them. Such were not the *old Whigs*—Such was not Andrew Marvel, whose character you once, I am told, *professed yourself* ambitious to emulate.

Your transition is happy from the grants of the crown and your own pension, to the French Revolution; but the conclusion you would deduce from it, is not quite so logical, as the transition is striking. I will disrobe it of metaphor, and put your argument in the form of a syllogism, for you love sometimes the dialect of the schools; and your education in St. Stephen's Chapel has not quite obliterated the rudiments you learned at St. Omer's.

The French Revolution originated in complaints of the lavish Expenditure of the public money :
 But the Duke of Bedford, and the Earl of Lauderdale have thought my pension among the instances of lavish Expenditure :
 Ergo, the Duke of Bedford, and the Earl of Lauderdale wish to produce a Revolution in this country similar to that of France.

In

In this syllogism the *major* is indeed unquestionable; but the consequence is illogical. It was indeed by a profusion of pensions, salaries, grants, loans, and contracts, that the French finances became irrecoverably deranged. The interest of the public debt could no longer be paid, and no additional taxes could possibly be levied. But a timely and prudent inspection into the national expenditure; the abolition of sinecure and unnecessary places; the reduction of unmerited pensions; and the disposal of contracts, commissions, and loans, by fair and open competition, would have prevented that most calamitous catastrophe, which I lament perhaps more sincerely than you do.

The rights of man were never dreamt of in France, till every right was invaded by the necessities, or seeming necessities of the state; till the rapacity of courtiers, and the improvidence of a spendthrift administration, who, like the present ministers of this country, paid the interest of one loan by creating a new one, had left men nothing they could call their own, and had virtually annihilated all property in the nation, except that which was vested in the hands of the privileged orders, or in the hands of a few monied men, who were necessary to the corruption and extravagance of the court. This is the true secret history of the French Revolution;

Revolution; and I sincerely hope and pray that
 “the example of France may operate as a warn-
 ing to Britain,”

Is it then consistent with logic, with sense, with
honesty, to insinuate, that because the Duke of Bed-
 ford and the Earl of Lauderdale, and those patriots
 who act with them, whose worth will be revered
 by future generations as much as it is disregarded
 by the present; because they would have prevented
 by negociation the most ruinous, the most bloody,
 and most expensive war in which this nation ever
 was engaged, a war which the minister had neither
 sense to avoid, nor abilities to conduct; because
 they recommended a prudent œconomy in every
 branch of administration; is it for these reasons
 that you charge them with endeavouring to pro-
 duce a revolution; when it is evident that no other
 means could be pursued so effectual for its pre-
 vention? The Duke of Bedford, as you observe
 very properly, has a large stake in the country,
 and he has had the sense to discern the only proper
 means of preserving it; he is a REAL ALARMIST,
 an alarmist upon rational motives. Mr. Pitt and
 you, Sir, have no stake in the country, and rash
 measures are well adapted to men of desperate
 fortunes.

I shall

I shall therefore attempt a syllogism in a different mode, and your judges and mine, the public, shall determine who is in the right.

The French Revolution originated in the lavish Expenditure of the public money:

But the Duke of Bedford and the Earl of Lauderdale have endeavoured to restrain the lavish Expenditure of Administration:

Ergo, they took the only rational means of preventing in this country a calamity similar to what has taken place in France.

Thus, Sir, I think your argument completely turns upon yourself. Because the two noble persons in question have called for an enquiry concerning your pension, you endeavour to insinuate against them a charge of desiring to produce a Revolution similar to that in France. If they had not objected to your pension, you would never have thought of such a charge. Now, as it happens, they have been acting in direct opposition to those principles and that line of conduct, which you would darkly, insidiously, and dishonestly charge them with; the real Revolutionary Committee, if there be one, consists of Edmund Burke, of William Pitt, of James (commonly called) Lord Grenville, and others their wicked abettors, who have wantonly

plunged the nation in a series of rash, precipitate, profuse, and ruinous measures; who have neither the skill and ability successfully to conduct a war, nor to negotiate a peace.

If every man in England, Sir, who thinks 4000l. per annum from the public purse, in times of scarcity and wretchedness, a reward above your deserts and your necessities, is to be considered as a Jacobin, then indeed is there cause for alarm, the club is indeed formidably numerous, since every man with whom I have conversed, of every party, is agreed in the sentiment. Nay, I will venture to assert, that the minister himself, must in this respect be a Jacobin in his heart. Profuse and improvident as he is, and though he spare no expence to gratify a favourite whim, to atchieve any selfish purpose, he must not only think, but he must know that this is a most scandalous perversion of his power, a most inexcusable profusion of the public treasure.

You are particularly unfortunate in your allusions to the French Revolution. By your former absurd pamphlet on this subject, you provoked the answer of Thomas Paine, and whatever mischief his publication has done, is ultimately to be referred to you. By your comparisons between the

state

state of the two countries, you excited a discussion, which left few men uninterested in the dispute. You infused jealousies, suspicions, and alarms, into one party ; you called up the indignation of the other, by your spirit of intolerance and persecution. Now, in truth and reason, the British nation had not the remotest concern with the French Revolution—Their business was to have viewed the storm as spectators, from their happy eminence of national prosperity. If the first attempts of the Constituent Assembly had succeeded ; if a good, stable, and permanent government could have been instituted, with a smaller portion of influence than we have given to our executive government, I grant that it would have afforded a precedent in this country, for some gentle and moderate reforms, which it would have been the interest of government to propose themselves. The attempt did not succeed, because, I agree with you, the French carried their projects of reform to a visionary extreme ; but all this we might have regarded as calm spectators, we *must* have regarded as such, while the majority of this nation was in the full enjoyment of peace and prosperity.

The very small party in this kingdom, which after the tenth of August remained attached to French principles (and that it was a small party,

the associations in 1792 sufficiently demonstrated) were soon disgusted with the succeeding atrocities. At this moment, though many circumstances have occurred, chiefly the work of you and your party, to prevent unanimity on this question, I solemnly declare, that I do not know a man, I have never conversed with a man, who approves of *all* that has been done in France. Some things all must approve in the French Revolution, some things you have approved yourself; for you have not yet been hardy enough to deny the necessity of a reform in that government. Of many things, men of sense will hesitate before they decide—Of many, all good men must entertain a just abhorrence. Some of the atrocities, which have been committed in France, appear to have been the result of that peculiarly difficult and unfortunate situation in which that nation was placed; a situation that naturally disposes to suspicion, jealousy, and party rancour and malignity; powerfully assailed from without, and conspired against within; or, as emphatically described by a writer, whose religion and charity I wish you could imitate—
 “ Without were fightings, within were fears”—
 Some of the crimes in which they have been involved, were the inevitable consequences of that deep-rooted system of corruption, which an unwise and profligate government had foolishly cherished,

rished, as necessary to its existence—Some were the effects of perverse passions, of specious villainy, and of that philosophy, “falsely so called,” which I agree with you in reprobating, which releases men from the fear of God.—

Of all this we might have been inactive, though melancholy spectators; and the more flagitious the conduct of the French, the less dangerous would have been their example. But some men are vulgarly, though expressively characterized, as delighting “to fish in troubled waters,” and I know no man to whom this character more applies than yourself.

The succeeding pages of your pamphlet, it would be an outrage on humanity to criticise with severity. The wanderings of a disturbed imagination command our pity.

A large portion of your pamphlet is, indeed, only fit to be bound up with Quarle’s Emblems, Bunyan’s Holy War, and other high efforts of genius in the regions of mysticism and allegory. Your sneer on geometricians and chemists, only serves to display your poverty and your pride; to inform the public in a handsome manner, that you understand neither of these sciences. The pun on
Sergeants

sergeants at law is contemptible ; and this is succeeded by a series of jokes upon convents and priors, beneath the conviviality of a porter-house. But for these I resign you to the rebuke of your *confessor*, who will doubtless enjoin a proper penance for having treated in a ludicrous manner, matters of so *sacred* a nature as the *revenues* of the church.

Your compassion for "the print of the poor ox that we see in the shop windows at Charing-cross," is in the same style ; it is ridiculous even beyond your happiest efforts, when you mean to be most serious ; and your transition to Lord Keppel's picture, from that of the ox, is really as if you had intended it as a burlesque upon your deceased friend, whose eulogium you conclude, by assuring your readers, that "he was no great clerk." You may apologise for all this as the "garrulity of age ;" for my own part, I see no purpose in it, unless you meant to involve a plain question in studied obscurity.

On one topic, however, I will undertake to set your heart at ease. You seem more than ordinarily solicitous, lest you should be supposed to countenance "a peace with regicides."—Trust me, Sir, no man, who is acquainted with your habits, principles,

ciples, and temper, will ever suspect you of the ambition of appearing in the character of a *peace-maker*—"A peace with regicides"—I can join you as heartily and sincerely as any man, in deploring the fate of the unfortunate monarch, to whom you allude—But is no compassion due to the fate of the thousands and *tens of thousands*, that have fallen in this disastrous contest? Men of like *parts* and *passions* with the monarch whom you lament—and can the human intellect be so disordered, as to mourn with deep-felt anguish the death of a *single man*, and to be callous to that complicated misery, which war entails on so large a portion of the human race?

You have shewn yourself sufficiently sensible to the affliction, with which you have been visited within the circle of your own family; I have said, and I repeat it, that I sincerely sympathise in your sorrow; but I confess that my astonishment is excited beyond the powers of expression, at the little of moral or religious instruction, which so distressing and melancholy an event appears to have imparted to your mind. You, Mr. Burke, have been a parent; you are inconsolable for the loss of a beloved and promising child—Reflect, then, I beseech you, for a moment, how many tender and affectionate parents are made childless by this

wanton, this detestable profusion of blood, for which you are not ashamed to appear as an advocate—"Thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women," was the reproof of a prophet to a tyrant and warrior of antiquity.—Reflect, Sir, I intreat you, how many excellent and valuable lives, the flower of England, of Germany, and of France, are daily cut off in this execrable contest, not by the stroke of providence, but by the malice and depravity of man.—"Me have ye bereaved of my children, and brought down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave," is the involuntary exclamation that will issue from the bleeding heart of many a wretched parent, and will be recorded in judgment against the wicked abettors of this most wicked war.

I do not ask you, Sir, are you a Christian?—The unbounded charity which that holy religion prescribes will not extend so far, as to admit of the prostitution of the term by applying it to any man, who can entertain such principles. No sophistry of the church of Rome, no pretendedly sacred authority or delegation from Heaven, no absolution from councils or from Popes can reconcile the massacre of mankind with the religion of Christ.—No soothing unction on a death-bed can administer

nister peace to that soul that has trifled in this manner with every precept of its God.

Your heroes of chivalry had indeed something to plead in their excuse ; they might have devoted to death their fellow creatures on some mistaken principles of honour ; yet they subjected *them* to no dangers of which they did not partake ; their vassals suffered no evils which they did not share themselves. Their campaigns were not made in the closet, but in the field. But if there is a character to be detested above every other, it is that malignant, cowardly disposition, which promotes quarrels, though it fears to meet them ; which busies itself only in exciting the bad passions of mankind ; seduces an ignorant and thoughtless multitude to murder one another ; and while it provokes to mischief, shrinks from the conflict, skulks like a recreant behind the baggage, views from a distance the evil it has created ; and feasts with a savage joy on human misery, while it reposes itself in the most perfect security. A character similar to this is only to be found in an ancient book, with which I wish you were better acquainted ; but which, in obedience to the canons of a certain church, you perhaps have refrained from perusing---The character to whom I allude, was " a liar and a murderer from the beginning ;" and

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being eternally wretched himself, he finds his only solace in the act of inflicting misery on others. If you have any conscience, any feeling, any pretence to religion, you will burn the pamphlet you have announced; and for what you have already done, you will repent in sackcloth and ashes.

To say that I expect this act of virtue from you, would be affectation. You will publish, I dare say, and you will attempt to support the odious argument on some sophistical plea of expediency or state necessity---I shall therefore reserve myself for the consideration of this part of the subject till your threatened pamphlet makes its appearance. But in the mean time, I will warn you of what the public will expect in that pamphlet. They will expect you to explain, in precise and definite terms, what never has been yet explained---The real motives of ministry in provoking this most disastrous, this ill-omened war. They will expect you to prove, in intelligible language, the *right* which they assumed to interfere in the internal government of an independent state. You must demonstrate what *profit* and emolument we were to derive from a contest, which was likely to cost more blood than a whole continent could redeem, and more treasure than would purchase both the Indies---What solid reasons there were to depart from a
 neutrality

neutrality truly enviable---To relinquish the unprecedented advantage of a monopoly of the whole commerce of the world. We shall look for some explanation of the mysterious conference at Pilnitz; of the compact on which the famous circular of Pavia was founded.

We shall not admit, Sir, of those circular arguments, those crocodile syllogisms, by which the absurd measures of administration have been hitherto defended. Believe me, Sir, the nation is no longer in a temper to be misled by metaphors, to be duped by declamation. The people will no longer bear to be told "that ministers engaged in war in order to prevent war."—That "a state of hostility is essential to the preservation of peace."—That "plots existed which could no where be found; and conspiracies without conspirators."—That "insurrection and riot are prevented by public calamity; and that rebellion is the necessary consequence of general content and prosperity." These, and other equally wise and just maxims, with which you and our sapient ministers have so often amused yourselves, and deluded others, will not now be endured. The people's blood must not be shed for the sake of an antithesis; nor the public treasure squandered in support of a paradox.

The

The people will reprobate the blasphemous assertion, "That we have been fighting for God and Religion!"—They will ridicule the assumption, that "we are to fight for peace." No, Sir, the people now demand solid arguments, open proof, positive and overbearing reasons. The fervour of enthusiasm is now cooled; it is quenched with blood. The terrors which have been raised by childish and improbable fictions are now abated. "What advantage can we possibly gain by persevering in the contest?" is the universal exclamation; and these advantages they will expect you to demonstrate upon the evident and infallible principles of vulgar arithmetic, and not on your metaphysical proportions, your moral mathematics, which is in truth no other than the art of substituting words in the place of ideas.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your's, &c.

Westpark, March 5,
1796.



R. P.